

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06
PRS-01 SP-02 HEW-04 OES-06 /053 W
-----151821Z 093777 /50
R 151757Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1804
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS

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PASS TREASURY FOR SYVRUD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB, FR
SUBJECT: CONTROLLED PROTEST ON THE LABOR SCENE

REF: PARIS 10660; PARIS 10417; PARIS 10307;
PARIS 09226; PARIS 08761

1. APRIL 14 WAS THE COMMUNIST-LED CGT'S NATION-WIDE DAY OF ACTION IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY. ALTHOUGH THE SOCIALIST-ORIENTED CFDT'S NATIONAL METALWORKERS FEDERATION HAD REFUSED TO JOIN IN THE EFFORT (SEE REFS), ITS LORRAINE BRANCH DID, AND REPORTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY INDICATE THAT THE CGT EFFORT WAS A MODEST SUCCESS, WITH BRIEF STOPPAGES OF WORK (ONE TO TWO HOURS) IN A NUMBER OF PLACES. (A 24-HOUR CGT STRIKE IN THE FRAGMENTED CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY THE DAY BEFORE WENT ALMOST UNNOTICED, AND THE WEEK-END DOCK STRIKES ARE BECOMING ALMOST ROUTINE.)
2. THIS CGT EFFORT IN THE STEEL ISSUE WAS COMPLETELY OVERSHADOWED BY A COMMUNITY-WIDE DEMONSTRATION THE

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SAME DAY IN THIONVILLE. HELD WITH THE ACTIVE SUPPORT INTER ALIA OF ALL OF FRANCE'S FIVE MAJOR UNIONS, A PROTEST MARCH WAS HELD AS THE ENTIRE CITY CLOSED DOWN FOR THREE HOURS. THE MARCHERS' WELL-PUBLICIZED AIM WAS TO UNDERSCORE THE COMMUNITY'S CONCERN FOR THEIR TROUBLED STEEL INDUSTRY. (ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION IS SCHEDULED FOR PARIS ON APRIL 19, THE DAY ON

WHICH THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL TAKE UP THE QUESTION
OF WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO BAIL OUT THE INDUSTRY.)

3. ON THE SAME AFTERNOON AS THE THIONVILLE AFFAIR,
ANDRE BERGERON, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE ANTI-
COMMUNIST FORCE OUVRIERE, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE.
SURROUNDED BY HIS CONFEDERATION'S CHIEF ELECTED
OFFICERS, BERGERON STRUCK OUT AT THE GOVERNMENT (I.E.
THE BARRE PLAN) FOR RISKING TROUBLE BY UNDERMINING
MEANINGFUL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, BUT THEN GAVE A
SIGNAL THAT IF THE AUTHORITIES COULD IMPROVE THEIR
OFFERS IN THE PUBLIC AND NATIONALIZED SECTOR NEGOTIA-
TIONS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, AN AGREEMENT WAS
STILL POSSIBLE. THAT SAID, BERGERON THEN DEFTLY
EXTRACTED HIMSELF FROM HAVING TO RESPOND HEAD-ON
TO THE PRESSURE TO JOIN IN THE CGT-CFDT ANTI-GOVERNMENT
CRUSADE THE LAST WEEK OF THIS MONTH (SEE REFS) BY
DECLARING THAT THE FO WOULD NOT BE EMBARKING ON
ANY MAJOR NEW UNDERTAKINGS UNTIL AFTER ITS MID-MAY
CONGRESS. (THE TEACHERS FEDERATION FEN, LACKING
SUCH A CONVENIENT WAY OUT, IS STILL "CONSULTING"
BEFORE MAKING ITS REPLY TO THE CGT-CFDT DIRECT CALL
FOR ITS SUPPORT.)

4. TO ROUND OFF AN ALREADY BUSY WEEK, THE
GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED ITS PROPOSALS FOR REFORMING
THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, WHICH WERE PROMPTLY AND

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06
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PREDICTABLY DENOUNCED BY ALL THE UNIONS. HOWEVER, THESE STUDIOUSLY MODEST MEASURES (E.G., REDUCTION ON THE REIMBURSEMENT OF LAXATIVE COSTS) DO NOT SEEM TO BE THE KIND THAT WILL READILY LEND THEMSELVES TO THE CGT AND CFDT'S POLITICAL PURPOSES, AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY ISSUE--WITH UNEMPLOYMENT ONE OF THE TWO BIG ISSUES SELECTED BY THE CGT AND CFDT FOR THE END OF THE MONTH CAMPAIGN--SEEMS TO BE ON THE WAY TO BECOMING A SIDE-ISSUE (A SEPARATE REPORT ON THE OVERALL SOCIAL SECURITY SITUATION WILL BE FORTHCOMING).

5. IN SUMMARY, IT WOULD APPEAR THE THE CGT AND CFDT'S POST-ELECTION PUSH IS STARTING TO RUN OUT OF STEAM. WITH THE CGT AND CFDT HEADQUARTERS THEMSELVES UNABLE TO AGREE ON A COMMON FRONT IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY, ALL THE NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS WERE ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER TO INSURE THAT THE CGT DID NOT RUN AWAY WITH THE THIONVILLE MARCH. MORE IMPORTANT STILL, THE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK SUGGEST THAT (SCARE STORIES IN LE MONDE AND ELSEWHERE NOTWITHSTANDING) THE RANK AND FILE IS INDEED IN A SOMBER BUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CAUTIOUS MOOD, AND THAT REAL LABOR TROUBLE IS UNLIKELY. HOWEVER, MUCH MAY YET DEPEND ON WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS TO SAY, OR FAILS TO SAY, IN ITS APRIL 26 STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC POLICY. WE STILL HAVE MORE THAN TWO WEEKS TO GO UNTIL MAY DAY, AND FRANCE IS NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET.
HARLAN

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